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# PIOCHE WEEKLY RECORD.

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NO. 39.

## A WHITE NEGRO.

One of the Most Remarkable Cases  
of the Age.

An Aged African Who Gradually Changed  
from a Deep Black to a Deadly  
White - A Puzzle to the  
Doctors.

For many years one of the most familiar and well-known figures on the streets of Westminster, Md., has been Abraham Ireland, familiarly known to both old and young as "Uncle Abram," a hard-working, industrious colored man, kind and genial in disposition and unobtrusive in manner, says a special from Westminster to the Baltimore Sun. Until recently he enjoyed excellent health. After a short illness of pneumonia, following an attack of the grip, he died the other morning at 7 o'clock, in the eighty-third year of his age. To the younger generation of Westminster he was probably not so great a curiosity as to the older ones, who remember him in his younger days as having a shiny, jet black skin, with every indication of his pure African lineage, and his gradual change to a pure white has been a constant source of speculation and curiosity. The change was not a sudden one, but very gradual, and the least noticeable. He was born at "Soldiers' Delight," Baltimore county, Md., on Palm Sunday, 1809, of slave parents, and was the property of Nicholas Lowe, who sold him to Amos Lowe, with whom he moved to Finksburg, Carroll county. When fifteen years old his master sold him to Mr. Andrew Powder, of Westminster, with whom he learned the tanner's trade and lived until he was forty-five years old. He worked at his trade until 1870, but did not think the tan had any effect on his color, as other colored men worked in the same yard without any change of complexion.

Both his parents were full-blooded Africans, very black, as are all of his children, his son David, one of the most prominent colored men in the town, having a rich mahogany complexion. The first change noticeable in Abraham was a white spot which appeared on his cheek about thirty years ago, then on his forehead and one wrist, the white spots appearing on different parts of his body and gaining for him the title of "Leopard." The spots then increased rapidly, finally coming together, until his entire body was of a sickly white, aptly described by Huck Finn in Mark Twain's famous book, as "fish-belly white." The change was complete and permanent, no fading from black to white nor shading of color, but pure, unmistakable white. His head is perfectly bald, and of the same deadly white as the rest of his body. A few spots of color have appeared in recent years upon his face and these he attributes to sunburn, as his life has been spent principally out of doors. His body was whiter than his face or hands. There has never appeared to be any skin disease or unpleasant itching sensation, and the old man at last succumbed to the hand of death, as so many others have done in the last year, from cold and the prevailing grip, his bodily health in every way being still unimpaired. While puzzling the medical fraternity Abraham attracted the attention of the public and received several offers to place himself on exhibition in dime museums, and also received a very flattering offer from the veteran showman, P. T. Barnum, but these he declined, preferring a quiet life with his son, never caring for notoriety. A few years ago Mrs. Jacob Eldridge, of Howell, Mich., a similar freak, died in that state and attracted considerable attention. She was also of full African blood, her grandfather having come from Guinea, and her experience of the change from a colored to a white person was similar to that of "Uncle Abram," suffering no inconvenience nor showing any signs of a skin disease. She was the only other case known to the public up to the present time.

## A Successful Charm.

A poor laboring woman at Graudenz on the Vistula in Prussia had won in the lottery. She placed the gold pieces in a stocking, wrapped some dirty handkerchiefs around and placed it among her dirty linen in the loft. Nobody would look for treasure there, so it was safe. Some time ago she wanted money, but, oh horror, stocking and gold were gone. She applied to an old sooth-sayer, who told her to take a piece of the money she had left of the sum won, wrap it in a piece of dirty linen and bury it in the graveyard. As the cloth began decomposing the thief would be seized with decline and die with qualms of conscience, forcing him, or her, to return the money to the rightful owner. They took care to make the advice known in the city and that it had been acted on. The very next day the stocking, with all the money in it, was found again among the dirty linen. The thief had evidently been seized with fear at the terrible sentence pronounced over him, and had hastened to return it in order to escape punishment.

## An Unfortunate People.

The lot of the Russian Jews is not a happy one. Most of the Hebrews who are expelled from the czar's empire travel through Germany on their way to a refuge in the new world. Now, by imperial decree just issued, they are prohibited from crossing the boundaries of Germany. A few of them were shot recently while attempting to cross the line. Some four hundred thousand of them are seeking to escape from Russian cruelties. Ejected by Russia and repelled by Germany, they know not where to turn.

## AN IDOL OF MOUND-BUILDERS.

The Modest Clay Deity of the Early American Frontier.

The State Historical society was enriched recently by an image of pottery supposed to be an idol of some prehistoric race, probably the mound-builders, says the Toledo Capital. The idol was found near Aron, Independence county, Ark., and was dug from a mound by relic-hunters along with a number of decayed human bones, copper arrow-heads and broken domestic utensils. It is the property of G. W. Hume, of Strasburg, Mo. The idol is five inches in diameter. It is rudely constructed, having evidently been formed by hand, or at best very crude tools, from common clay and afterward hardened by being dried in the sun.

The idol represents a human figure in a kneeling posture, the arms extending at the sides. The features are rudely formed, yet, notwithstanding this, are not altogether repulsive, the nose being gracefully aquiline and the lips well formed. The ears are missing, but the remains show that they were adorned with rings. The body is "squatny," and might be said to resemble a toad. At the top of the head there is a hole which seems to have a purpose, probably that of fastening a head dress to the figure. The image would hardly be catalogued with the works of art, but it is, nevertheless, an interesting relic.

The race whose deity was represented by this clumsy bit of clay inhabited the Mississippi valley from the great lakes to the gulf at a time to which the traditions of man runneth not. Who they were, where they came from, what their manner of life was, is all a mystery. True, many mounds, excavations and burying grounds of this lost people have been discovered, but so far they have given but little of their history. That they lived and died before the race of American Indians existed is proven by the fact that the traditions of the latter race contain no references to this lost people although their mounds and relics are mentioned. Many mounds of this kind are found in Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and Indiana, and a few have been discovered in nearly all of the states in the Mississippi valley.

## BETTER THAN A CAT.

A Pet Snake That Occupies a Favored Place in a Farmer's Household.

A Niagara county farmer tells of a snake which has been gliding about his premises for the past ten years. The snake is about four feet long, is some over three inches in thickness at the abdomen and has an open and engaging countenance. His snakeship was first brought to the farmer's notice in 1881 by the suspicious actions of his son and heir. The boy one day attempted to kill the family cat, which had long been his favorite pet and developed a marked aversion to the dog. The family was at a loss to explain his peculiar actions until one day it was discovered that the lad was keeping a snake in his bedroom. He fed the reptile on milk stolen from the pantry, and took the strange pet to bed with him nights. The parents at first were greatly horrified and wanted to kill the snake, but the boy protested and at last his wishes were regarded. It was found that the animal was harmless, and at last the family came to look upon the reptile with considerable favor. He keeps the premises free from rodents and saves the expense of feeding cats and dogs.

During the first five years of his residence with the family, says the Buffalo Enquirer, the snake retired to the cellar in the autumn and passed the winter in a state of torpor. But since the winter of 1888 he has given up this habit and is now as lively as a cricket even during the coldest weather. The snake takes his meals at the same time as the family. He is regularly provided for. If by any chance he is forgotten he makes his disapproval known in a peculiar hissing. The snake displays a great love of music, and twists around the leg of the piano whenever anyone plays. He also chooses the same leg, which is worn considerably by reason of his peculiar writhings whenever a lively tune is played.

The farmer says that he would not part with the snake for any money, and his son, although now a young man, still regards the reptile as a most desirable pet.

## A Mischievous Bird.

There is a parrot in St. Louis, which exclaims, whenever a man enters the room: "You're drunk, sir, and had better go away. I don't want to see you till you're over it." People wonder how the bird catches on, but the explanation is simple; it doesn't know how to say anything else, and of course in making the remark to every man it frequently gets near home. One gentleman who called thought it was the lady of the house speaking, and rushed out of the parlor. She sat down to write a note of explanation to him, when to her amazement a servant brought her a note from the gentleman she was writing to, in which he stated that he acknowledged with humility that he had perhaps taken too much wine with his dinner, but had hoped on calling on her that she would not have detected it. As she had done so, however, he offered his most abject apologies and a prayer for forgiveness.

## Australian Trees.

One of the attractive features of the Australian exhibit at the fair will be tree ferns from Sydney, New South Wales. These have always been a popular exhibit at London expositions. Chief Samuels, has been assured by New South Wales, that a number of rare specimens will be sent. The ferns vary in height from eight to fourteen feet. At the close of the exposition many of them will be given to the park commissioners of Chicago.

## GROWTH OF THE HAIR.

How It is Affected by Certain Kinds of Food.

The influence of diet upon the growth of hair is the subject of a paper in a recent number of the British Medical Journal. The writer says: "Several cases of shedding of hair after influenza have confirmed my opinion that diet has much to do with the production and with the cure of symptomatic alopecia. Hair contains five per cent. of sulphur, and its ash twenty per cent. of silicon and ten per cent. of iron and manganese. Solutions of beef or rather part of it, starchy mixtures, and even milk, which constitute the diet of patients with influenza and other fevers, cannot supply these elements, and atrophy at the root and falling of hair result. The color and strength of hair in young mammals is not attained so long as milk is their sole food. As to drugs, iron has prompt influence. The foods which most abundantly contain the above-named elements are the various albuminoids and the oat, the ash of that grain yielding twenty-two per cent. of silicon. I have often found a dietary largely composed of oatmeal and brown bread greatly promote the growth of hair, especially when the baldness was preceded by constipation and sluggish capillary circulation. Those races of men who consume most meat are the most hirsute."

## A Strange Story.

Round the neck of the holy virgin of Alameda, the patron saint of Madrid, for whom a fine new church is being built close to the royal palace, a very beautiful diamond ring hangs on a thin gold chain. The ring belonged to the late King Alfonso XII, and a strange history is connected with it, which may well appeal to the minds of the superstitious Spaniards. On the day of his wedding to Mercedes, the daughter of the duke of Montpensier, the king gave the ring to his bride, who wore it till her early death. After the funeral the king gave the ring to his grandmother, Queen Christine, who died soon after. Infanta Maria del Pilar, the sister of the king, then became its possessor. She had worn it only a few days when she died. Then the ring became the property of the king once more, and he gave it to the sister of his late consort, Princess Christina, the youngest daughter of the duke of Montpensier. Three months later the young girl was dead. The king had now become aware of the unfortunate coincidences, and instead of giving it away again he himself wore the ring until he also went to his early grave.

## Youthful Prodigies.

English newspapers are talking of a little girl of ten who has rewritten the books of Euclid, supplied new examples and proved all her propositions. Youthful prodigies are commonly supposed to be a peculiar product of the forcing process of American civilization, but when they do appear in England they compel admiration from their precocity. John Stuart Mill struggled with Greek verse at nine, and Cardinal Newman at five was deep in Ovid, while the younger Pitt went up to the university at sixteen with a store of learning that amazed his tutors.

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